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Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

December 21, 2016

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave., NW
Washington, D.C. 20006

Dear President Obama:

It has come to my attention that refugees from Syria have been approved for resettlement in my congressional district. The State of Wisconsin has a tradition of welcoming refugees, such as the Hmong from Southeast Asia, which has strengthened our communities and given innocent civilians a way to escape war in their home country. While I am proud our state has accepted many refugees with open hearts and arms, I am concerned about the adequacy of the security vetting standards used by your Administration to ensure that refugees from places with high threats of terrorism – such as Syria – do not pose a risk to the United States.

Many of my constituents are understandably concerned about inadequate security screening procedures for refugees seeking entry into the United States. Syria has become home to the largest breeding ground of terrorists in history and even your own Administration officials have highlighted the threat that accepting refugees from the country might have on our national security. Director of National Intelligence (DNI) James Clapper said in September 2015, “we don’t obviously put it past the likes of ISIL to infiltrate operatives among these refugees... That is a huge concern of ours.” In October of the same year, Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Secretary Jeh Johnson said that “It is true that we are not going to know a whole lot about the Syrians that come forth in this process... That is definitely a challenge... We know that organizations like ISIL might like to exploit this [Syrian refugee resettlement] program.” Their concerns seem to have been corroborated by ISIL smugglers who have said they will use the refugee crisis to infiltrate the West.

While I appreciate the fact that the Administration has offered classified briefings to Members of Congress regarding the vetting procedures used to assess the risks posed by Syrian refugees, this information is not made available to the public who have little confidence that the current screening standards are sufficient. A recent car and knife attack at Ohio State University perpetrated by a refugee highlights the concerns that my community has about the potential for terrorists to be admitted into the country. Moreover, your threat to veto legislation which the House passed and I supported to require a joint certification by the DNI, DHS and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) that each refugee admitted into the country from Syria do not poses a nation security risk to the United States, gives my constituents and me little confidence that the process can’t be compromised.

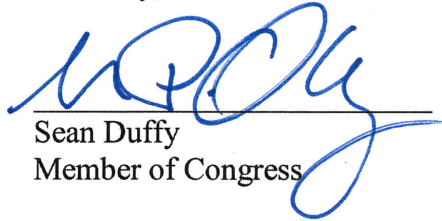
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Before admitting any refugees in the U.S., I ask that you immediately declassify the vetting procedures used to screen potential refugees and provide assurances that new admissions pose no threat to the U.S. As this is a matter of immediate concern, I request that you respond prior to the resettlement of any additional refugees.

Sincerely,



Sean Duffy
Member of Congress